Minority Issues

Improving The Quality of Life For Middlebury's Students of Color
13 April 1998

I. Introduction

In light of the April Fool's Edition of The Campus, these recommendations have been created in order to better equip Middlebury College support for Students of Color. As students of color on this campus, it is often up to us to not only educate ourselves and provide for our own social well-being, but also to educate the wider campus of our issues and our respective cultures. Although we realize that this is a burden that we must accept, we also put our faith in this institution to provide us with the resources to create comfortable academic and educational atmosphere. The institution must commit itself to improving the support system for Middlebury's students of color. The support system that currently exists must be enhanced in order to help us better deal with the pressures that being classified as an 'other' places on us at Middlebury College. We as students of color are often spread too thin, trying not only to keep up with our work load, but to also meet our social needs which are not catered to or automatically thought about at Middlebury. Our plan for achieving these goals include the enhancement of P.A.L.A.N.A, Alumni of Color Weekend, Faculty/Staff, and also fitting in with the Commons System.

II. P.A.L.A.N.A

The P.A.L.A.N.A Center that exists now is not the Center that the founders nor its current resident envision for the future. For six years the Center has made gradual progress, but expansion of the physical building and its resources are definitely needed.

A. *Directors*

Currently there is no director of the center. A full time director is needed for the center ASAP because the P.A.L.A.N.A has constant programming during the academic school year and the RA, who is also a student, should not be expected to take on full programming of the center. After this position was left behind by professor Ronda Ferguson, no one else has filled this position. Professor Ferguson being full time director of the center not only had professional but also personal skills to offer the center. The center has lost that connection with the faculty/staff members and also it's communication with other groups outside of Middlebury.

B.The Budget of the P.A.L.A.N.A Center

Currently, the Center has a budget of $7,000 and a personal budget of only $300. This is unacceptable considering all the events sponsored and co-sponsored by the Center. Furthermore, P.A.L.A.N.A must work as an umbrella for a wide variety of groups and people. We have extended ourselves to work with the community as well which has lead us to create the P.A.L.A.N.A Kids, an outgrowth of the Community Friends program. We serve both the cultural and social needs of our residents, the campus and the Middlebury community. This is a tremendous task which requires more than $7,300 can allow. We need an operational budget of $30,000. This is the equivalent to the Dartmouth Cultural Center's budget and would give us the means to expand the Center.

As things are now, the Residential Assistant works with the minimal $300 budget while the Director is responsible for the larger $7,000 budget. This needs to changed. Currently, the advisor of the Center, while very committed is not always available, making it very difficult to communicate as well as to organize events on an appropriate scale for a Center of Diversity. The Residential Assistant should have access to more of the budget than $300. At least half of the budget allotted to the Center should be student controlled. The P.A.L.A.N.A is restricted not only by the availability of the Director, but also by the amount of money allotted to the Center.

Often P.A.L.A.N.A Center and students of color who work on campus wide organizations are constricted by quotas and numbers. The question is often asked, "Will people go to that event?" A lot of times the need for the diversity events outweighs any figures or quotas. Making the statement is more important than meeting quotas, especially when these events are new and innovative. Many of these events, desired by the Center and students of color groups, are new and thus will not get the following being sought over night. But just like the AAA Comedy Show has proven, once a campus get accustom to seeing these types of events than taste is acquired for them. College is a place to try new things and the most of the events put on by the school right now are very mainstream. One of the main purposes of the Center is to diversify the campus culturally and

academically. The budget that exists now does not make this feasible.

C. *Physical Structure of P.A.L.A.N.A*

Parts of the Center's space are used inefficiently. One primary example is the P.A.L.A.N.A Basement. Currently it is not being used for anything at all. There are endless possibilities for the space in the basement, but their are no facilities there to accommodate regular activities provided by the center. In the immediate future the basement needs to be renovated to include the following:

- Appropriate heating
- Furniture
- A Stereo System with speakers and microphones for panel discussions and social gatherings
- Better Brighter Lighting
- A Pool Table
- Video Games

*We realize that we will not be able to solve all the racial problems on this campus because people will always have their own views that we cannot change, but we need to make this place a more comfortable environment for the students of color to feel like they belong by catering to their needs as well.

D. *Future needs*

1. Moving the Center (not into Centano)
2. Building a more effective facility
3. Intercollegiate cultural outreach

-We understand this is a residential college and we do not want students of color to be absent on campus, therefore, we are not talking about every weekend and we are not restricted to only cultural events. We would like to have opportunities to enhance our academic experience in ways that Middlebury cannot achieve. Like the research of the commons system, these trips would allow students to visit other multicultural centers at schools with a the size and environment similar to Middlebury and create a model fit for the Middlebury community.

III. Alumni of Color Weekend

This weekend was established nine years ago when Rhonda Ferguson was director for the Center by Leroy Nesbitt. Alumni of Color Weekend started out with a few alums and expanded into a reunion

of over 50 alums and their families. Over the years, this weekend has been very productive and essential to the students of color presently attending Middlebury. The alumni networking with students has shown tremendous progress. The alums are able to share with students a first hand knowledge of a Middlebury graduate of color in the job market and also provide internships and possibly job opportunities for them. African American students needs to find support in this strange and sometimes unaccepted environment and the alums of color definitely provides that kind of support. There have been various activities provided that weekend to accommodate the need to bring the alums and the students together to provide the necessary information sessions for the students in every different aspects. Due to limited funding, those activities are few in numbers. Also, the fact that most alums cannot stay in the Center because the house can't accommodate them, they are forced to stay in hotels. This not only limits the amount of alumnus who attend the weekend, but also limit the informational sessions due to the fact that the alums who did not come cannot provide the necessary information for a particular subject area. *The college provides housing for the annual class reunions, so why doesn't Middlebury do the same for the alums of color.* The Center's budget cannot cover it even with the support of student of color organizations. *There needs to be addition funding to support the Alumni of Color weekend and the activities it provides.* In the past there have been panel discussions on Diversity, Affirmative Action, etc., lectures on African American Literature, African American Art, etc., and also educational expeditions such as the Annual March For Equality and Justice. This event has proved it's necessity and it's time to put it to use to it's fullest capacity.

IV. Faculty and Staff

Within the past four years, Middlebury has lost plenty faculty of color. The current faculty count on Middlebury is approximately 259 and approximately 23 are placed in the category of faculty of color which is relatively 9% of total faculty. This 9% is predominately made up of the professors from the language department such as: Chinese, Japanese and the Spanish department. It would be strange if these language departments did not have a large number of native faculty member, therefore these departments will not be addressed. What about the Science department? Sociology department? Psychology department? And the other departments that do not have any faculty of color or maybe one? Excuse for not having an African American or Latino in some of

these departments may simply be that students of color are not particularly prevalent in those fields, but that's definitely not an excuse for the Sociology and Anthropology Departments. The Sociology and Anthropology Department have had the largest number of African American and Latino graduates. But, why are those departments not hiring faculty of color when Middlebury has produced plenty? Students of Color are not only limited to the Sociology and Anthropology Department. They are also in Economics, Political Science, Psychology, and the Science Departments. *As regular that Middlebury recruit students of Color, it can also put the initiative in recruiting faculty of color.*

A. *Visiting Professors*

It is our understanding when a professor goes on leave or there is a temporary opening in a department, a visiting professor is brought in to fill that spot. Departments are not always looking for full-time faculty, but are continuously in need of visiting/temporary faculty, *therefore this is a great opportunity to bring faculty of color in that field to campus.* Also, if they are reviewed and the department approve of them and their ability to teach in their area of studies, then, *they should be given the option to stay on in that position or somewhere else in their field.* This is not to say that only people of color should be given those openings, but each department should target at least two visiting faculty of color for each semester.

B. *Full-time Faculty*

The full-time faculty of color percentage is about 10%, if not lower this year. The departments need to delegate a certain number of seats, excluding the language departments, to faculty of color each year for a full-time position. We need to increase the faculty and staff of color because there are a few at the present who are overwhelm with responsibilities. The current faculty/staff, Janine Clookey and Leroy Nesbitt do not have anytime to serve. They are the most visible source of support from faculty/staff of color that is available to the students of color at the moment, but they have to do the work of relatively ten people. Leroy is always off campus trying to recruit students of color and Janine apart from teaching and doing research work has to run the Office of Academic Support. They have both tried their best to serve as a support for students of color, but this is simple too much for two

people to take on themselves. In order to secure the stay of faculty of color at Middlebury, the administration should allow them more freedom to:

1. *have the space to do their academic work*
2. *understand that they are not here to do student service work* (A perfect example of these professors are Prof. Wyatt and Hart. Although, the support the issues of the student of color, they are not forced to take part in anyway.)

V. Multi-Cultural Department

In light of promoting diversity on campus, Middlebury needs to provide the curriculum to assist those goals. There a few classes dedicate to minority issues. The classes offered that are geared towards minority groups such as African Americans are so few that there is no official declared major or minor in African American Studies and there needs to be one. There is definitely an interest in that area, but their needs to be more classes with variety to attract not only students of color, but the wider campus as well.

This proposal is a production of the combined efforts of the following campus organizations:

African American Alliance
Alianza Latinamericana y Caribeña
Pan-Caribbean Students
Women of Color
Men of Color
Pan African Latino Asian Native-American Center